



# ADVISOR



TEACHERS, EMPLOYEES, PUBLIC, STATE POLICE AND JUDICIAL

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SERVING OVER 320,000 MEMBERS

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## Mobile's New Skyline



**W**ith the new crown of the Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel in downtown Mobile, the city on the bay sparkles. With the last piece in place, the hotel's summit looks like a miniature version of the RSA Battle House Tower just down the street. As with the RSA Battle House Tower, the hotel's roof will also be equipped with colorful lights. Both buildings are owned by the Retirement Systems of Alabama. ■



## RTJ GOLF Update

### Golfers

#### Wales – England

A five-page story from England: "*The Trail*...has helped transform the area into one of the most popular golf destinations in America....At The Grand...the southern hospitality for what these people are noted and which would set the standard for the whole of any visit to this great state....At Ross Bridge...whose reputation had certainly gone before it and was on everyone's tongue....With my visit coming to an end, I was able to see my first Navistar LPGA event, with local player Joanne Morley as one of the 144 players....The long trip home gave me time to reflect upon the wondrous golf courses...."

#### Golf Chicago

A great five-page story in this magazine: "...An attraction to persuade passing tourists to stop in 'Bama. The attraction was golf, lots of golf....Playing only a portion of *The Trail* was an eye-opening experience....I encourage you to play all 468 holes...." The rest of the article shows seven pictures and summaries of Ross Bridge, Oxmoor Valley, Silver Lakes, Capitol Hill and Cambrian Ridge.

#### Mobile Press-Register

"Mr. Thomas St. Pierre, a 70-year-old from Manahawkin, New Jersey, received a Christmas present from his daughters to play every trail course! He started on February 6 in Huntsville and worked his way to Mobile. He liked it so much that he worked his way back to Huntsville, completing over 900 holes of golf by February 29!

Mr. St. Pierre said, 'My favorite course was the one I played today. How can you pick one course, they are all awesome.' He plans a return trip in May."

#### Cybergolf

Alabama's Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail recently received high praise from Cybergolf.com. Exactly how high was the praise? Well, according to Cybergolf writer David Wood, the RTJ ranks above "golf's birthplace in Scotland's Kingdom of Fife, California's majestic Monterey Peninsula, the golf wonderland of New Zealand, and magical Kauai with its beguiling ocean-view courses."

Although Wood could not resist taking a shot or two at the state, saying that Alabama was formerly "mostly where vacation seeking folks stopped to eat at Waffle Hut en route to Disney World," but to be perfectly honest, that snarkiness was not completely unwarranted. Besides, Wood makes up for that by calling the courses "shockingly superb" and saying that the Ross Bridge location was one of the best he had played in the world. ■

## A New Tradition

THE GRAND HOTEL'S MILITARY LEGACY

**S**ince opening its doors more than 160 years ago, the Grand Hotel has played an important role in society and with the military. The Grand Hotel was originally built in 1847 as a two-story building with 40 rooms. Over the years, the Grand Hotel has hosted guests from American presidents to leaders from around the world to generations

of families from across the country. Guests originally traveled to the Grand Hotel by steamboats and docked at what is now the Marina.

During times of war, the Grand Hotel was very important to the military. The Grand Hotel was used as a hospital during the Civil War. During World War II,



*Continued on page 2*

# Nearing Retirement? Visit Social Security Online

Jody Harris, Social Security Administration

As much as the Internet has become part of daily American life, the age group that has been slowest to adapt to Internet use for everyday business and information needs has been Americans age 65 and older. According to a recent report by the PEW Research Center, only about a third of those over age 65 use the Internet, compared with more than twice that number of those age 50 to 64. Most of this latter group are baby boomers, who will be retiring (and planning their retirements) in large numbers over the next few years.

If you are one of these Internet savvy baby boomers, Social Security wants you to know that we are open for business at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov). Whether you are just planning your retirement, or are actually ready to apply for Social Security retirement benefits, here are the Social Security online services you may want to consider:

- **Social Security Benefit Application:** When you decide to take the plunge

and actually retire, you can apply for your retirement (or spouse's) benefits online.

- **Retirement Planners:** You can estimate your future benefits and also use links to outside Web sites that discuss other sources of retirement income and post-retirement concerns such as housing and medical care.

Many Americans have questions about the Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs, such as how to apply for benefits or what are their rights and responsibilities under these programs. That is why one of the most popular services on our Web site is the Social Security directory of frequently asked questions and answers.

Need to know how to replace a lost Social Security card? Should you be paying taxes on your Social Security benefits? What about hiring a household worker, such as a housekeeper or babysitter? Do you need to pay taxes on their wages? How can you contact Social Security when you are outside the

United States?

Whatever your Social Security question, you can find clear, easy-to-understand answers on Social Security's Web site. In fact, 630 questions and answers are listed in the directory – all categorized and easy to find. And if there is a question and answer on a topic that is of particular interest or importance to you, you can request that Social Security notify you by e-mail if the answer is updated.

Of course, you could have a question that has not been asked before. That, too, is no problem. If you cannot find your question, go to the "Ask a Question" option at the top of the *Questions* page and tell us what you want to know. You will receive an electronic response from Social Security.

Even if you are not yet ready to use these Social Security online services, I urge you to visit our Web site and check them out, so that when you are ready you will know just what help is available to you. ■

## A New Tradition *continued*

the hotel was used by the U.S. Army Air Forces for training.

Each day a cannon is fired to salute our military today and those who have passed through this historic hotel over the years. The cannon is similar to the ones used across the country when the Grand Hotel first opened in 1847.

Every afternoon a procession around the historic Grand Hotel grounds starts in the hotel lobby and concludes with the firing of the cannon at approximately 4:00 p.m. We hope you will join our Grand Salute to the Military. ■

## Prison

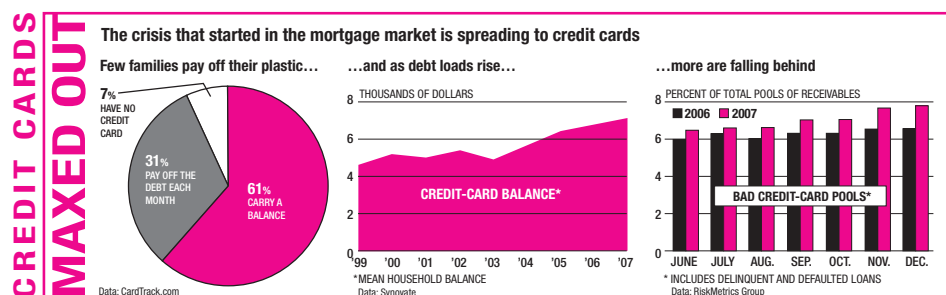
Source: PEW Report

After three decades of explosive growth, the nation's prison population has reached some grim milestones: More than 1 in 100 American adults are behind bars. One in nine black men, ages 20 to 34 are serving time, as are 1 in 36 adult Hispanic men.

Nationwide, the prison population hovers at almost 1.6 million, which surpasses all other countries for which there are reliable figures. The 50 states last year spent about \$44 billion in tax dollars on corrections, up from nearly \$11 bil-

lion in 1987. Vermont, Connecticut, Delaware, Michigan and Oregon devote as much money or more to corrections as they do to higher education....

The key, as some states are learning, is getting smarter about distinguishing between violent criminals and dangerous repeat offenders, who need a prison cell, and low-risk offenders, who can be handled with effective community supervision, electronic monitoring and mandatory drug treatment programs, combined in some cases with shorter sentences...." ■



## ANNUAL REPORT AVAILABLE

Telephone – (334) 242-5718 or  
800-214-2158, ext. 1503

Or Write\* – RSA Annual Report  
P.O. Box 302150  
Montgomery, AL 36130-2150

\*Include your Name/Address and Zip Code

# Credit Contagion

Mortimer B. Zuckerman, *U.S. News & World Report*

**I**N THE FACE OF THE WORST CREDIT and financial crunch since the Great Depression, many of our politicians, commentators, and even non-financial CEOs seem to be in a state of virtual denial of the risks we face. Mere talk about change and hope will not cut it. The past has caught up with us, and there won't be much of a future until we work those problems out.

We are having a bad hangover from easy money. Very easy. Thanks to low interest rates and an expanding money supply, people and companies borrowed more than they could reasonably pay back. The average debt-to-income ratio for the middle class in America has climbed to 141 percent, twice what it was in 1983. In the United States as a whole, the ratio of all debt to GDP rose to 342 percent at the end of September 2007,

more than double what it was in 1975.

...Asset prices increased and economic growth accelerated with a double bubble in credit and housing. Banks were willing to lend more and more to purchasers who bid more and more for a house.... As the price of assets began to decline, the result was a contraction of debt as banks lost billions, first on subprime mortgages that rested on declining residential real estate. Then the contagion spread to other categories of debt: credit cards, car loans, student loans, leveraged-buyout loans, commercial mortgage-backed securities...all of which once looked solid and have now begun to experience capital losses.

...One symptom of the bubble was that investors and lenders had come to depend on cheaper short-term borrowing to finance higher-yield long-term

holdings.... This borrow-short, invest-long strategy has worked over 90 percent of the time. When it doesn't, the consequences are proving to be catastrophic because of the degree to which this kind of leveraged structuring took place.

The greatest area of concern, though, is falling prices in the biggest asset category in the U.S. economy — homes.... If prices decrease by as much as 20 percent in 2008 and 2009, as Merrill Lynch estimates, this may mean that over 10 million American homeowners will have no equity left.... We are in uncharted waters with unprecedented risks that could result in a longer and deeper recession than any we have experienced since WWII. Bold leadership and new thinking are urgently needed." ■

## Nuclear Power

Source: *Mobile Press-Register*

**B**RITISH LEADERS got tired of wringing their hands about global warming and the energy crisis and decided to take decisive action. They turned to an old but still very viable solution: nuclear power.

Meanwhile, in the United States, Congress is fiddling with dubious conservation measures and wasting billions on "alternative" energy sources that will never replace environmentally incorrect oil and coal.

With oil prices hovering around \$100 a barrel, Congress passed—and President Bush signed—an energy bill that won't significantly reduce the nation's dependence on imported oil or have any real effect on climate change.

America's leaders need to take a lesson on alternative energy from the mother country. The United States pioneered nuclear power, but it's falling behind Old Europe in exploiting this clean and highly efficient energy source.

Britain is preparing to build a new generation of nuclear power plants to replace its aging atomic facilities. In a speech to the House of Commons, Energy Secretary John Hutton made a straightforward case for going nuclear.

Nuclear energy is 'tried and tested, safe and secure,' he said. 'Nuclear power will help us meet our twin energy challenges — ensuring secure supplies and tackling climate change.'

Why can't America's leaders speak this clearly about the benefits of nuclear power? President Bush has made a little progress with some tentative attempts to promote nuclear energy. But, for the most part, he has bowed to the Three Mile Island syndrome that has stymied efforts to build nuclear power installations for more than 25 years.

Ironically, this irrational fear of the word "nuclear" has forced the nation into greater dependence on coal-burning power plants that contribute greatly to pollution.

As Investor's Business Daily noted in an editorial, a government study found that the United States could meet the requirements of the Kyoto climate treaty by following the lead of France, which produces 80 percent of its power with nuclear plants. Currently, nuclear facilities produce about 20 percent of the electricity consumed in both the United States and Britain.

The Press-Register editorial board

has rarely, if ever, urged U.S. leaders to emulate their counterparts in France. But we concede that on the issue of nuclear power, French President Nicolas Sarkozy is setting an example that President Bush and congressional leaders should follow.

President Sarkozy is urging other countries to exploit nuclear power, asserting, correctly, that it's a safe, clean substitute for fossil fuels.

Nuclear waste disposal remains a concern, but France safely recycles spent nuclear fuel and Britain apparently intends to bury its waste. If the problem is manageable in small, densely populated European countries, surely it can be managed in a country as large as the United States.

We can't escape dependence on oil from unstable foreign sources by relying on inefficient ethanol. And we can't make room for enough windmills and solar panels to generate the power needed by consumers and industry.

But we can solve the energy crisis and substantially reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, if we can just overcome the lingering fear of all things nuclear." ■

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FOR RSA MEMBERS

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- June 1–5, 11, 15–18, 29–30

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**Mobile – \$69**

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**Marriott Grand – RSA Golf Package – \$159**

Ask for code – LOCD

Includes: Deluxe Room, One Round of Golf for Two People. Call for Tee Times after booking package

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- June 7, 13–14, 29–30

**Renaissance Montgomery – \$79**

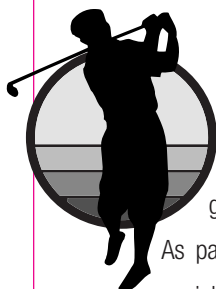
- Apr. 1, 6, 12–14, 25–26
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*Book early because the rooms are limited at these special rates.  
These rates are not applicable to groups or conventions.*

Code: RABM, 800-228-9290

# Father-Son Golf Tournament

LIFE IS SHORT



**D**oes it some-  
times feel like  
our children start

kindergarten one day and  
go off to college the next?

As parents look back, it is the  
special family outings that will  
always be remembered. Many dads attend  
numerous sporting events that their sons  
participate in while in school, but the activi-  
ties such as hunting and golfing together will  
be remembered the most.

May 24–25 provides the perfect golf  
experience for fathers and sons to enjoy  
together at the Father-Son Golf Champion-  
ship at Cambrian Ridge in Greenville. This  
will mark the 10th year fathers and sons  
have come from all across America to play in  
this event.

For more information, please call Danny  
Foster at 334-382-9787, or email [dfoster@](mailto:dfoster@rtjgolf.com)  
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